Pandemic H1N1 Influenza Q&A

If You Do Not Have Pandemic H1N1 Influenza

The pandemic H1N1 influenza virus is transmitted through human-to-human contact the same way as seasonal flu, by respiratory droplets. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live several hours on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Your seasonal flu shot will not protect you from pandemic H1N1 influenza.

Protect yourself:

- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze or have contact with someone who is ill.
- · Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- · Avoid sick people when possible.
- · Stay home if you get sick with influenza.

If You Have Pandemic H1N1 Influenza

If you are in an area where influenza cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, you may want to contact you health care provider. These symptoms are similar to normal seasonal influenza. They include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, and muscle aches. If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

Warning Signs in Children:

- · Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- · Bluish skin color
- · Not drinking enough fluids
- · Not waking up or not interacting
- · Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- · Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough
- · Fever with a rash

Warning Signs in Adults:

- · Difficulty breathing
- · Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- · Sudden dizziness
- · Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

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Other Thoughts About Pandemic H1N1 Influenza

What are the symptoms of this new flu strain in humans?

Because the pandemic H1N1 virus is new and may change, symptoms may change too. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, and muscle aches. Some people have also reported runny nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Symptoms appear 2-7 days after exposure.

What medications are available to treat flu infections in humans?

At this time, CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamirvir (Relenza). Use of these drugs for prevention of flu is not recommended at this time.

How do I care for an ill person at home?

Separate the ill person from others, at least 3 feet in distance from others. Wash your hands after contact with an ill person or objects the ill person has handled. Keep the environment clean with readily available household cleaning agents.

How can human infections with influenza be diagnosed?

A health care provider will usually make a diagnosis by looking at your symptoms and making a clinical diagnosis. The health care provider may order additional tests and send a swab to a laboratory to confirm if someone has influenza. A health care provider can collect a respiratory specimen (swab) within the first 2 - 3 days of illness onset.

When are people contagious?

People generally can spread influenza viruses from 1-2 days before symptoms start to about 7 days after. Because people can spread influenza virus before they become ill, it is extremely important to always practice recommended hygiene measures. Scientists are not exactly sure how long people may shed the new pandemic H1N1 influenza virus.

